THE MINISTERY OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) to (c) Promotion and development of Small Scale Industrial sector has been conscious policy of the Government as the sector is the major contributor to generation of employment opportunities in the country. With a view to further strengthen the SSI sector, the Government announced a Comprehensive Policy Package on 30th August, 2000 which provides enhanced fiscal and credit support, better infrastructure and market facilities and incentives for technology upgradation. The Package aims to enhance its competitiveness both domestically and globally, leading to higher growth and greater employment opportunities.

Employment generation potential in SSIs

1037. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is enormous untapped potential for employment generation in the small scale sector and efforts need to be made to strengthen its commercial viability, enhance its technologies base, improve quality and productivity, step up its marketing and make fresh investments in the sector; and

(b) if so, what is the action plan to achieve these objectives?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Number of promotional Schemes are implemented by the Ministry of Small Scale Industries to provide an impetus for the growth and development of small scale sector as well as for creating employment opportunities. These Schemes and Programmes *inter-alia* include, Exemption in Excise Duty up to Rs. 1 crore turnover & Enactment of Delayed Payment Act for facilitating prompt payment to improve commercial viability; National Equity Fund Scheme &

Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Credit support; Integrated Infrastructure Development Scheme for encouraging fresh investments; Capital Subsidy Scheme of 12% for investment in technology in select sectors, setting up of Tool Rooms, Process/ Product Development Centres & Technology upgradation and Modernisation Scheme for technology upgradation and enhancing technology base; Scheme for reimbursement of Expenditure up to Rs. 75,000/- for obtaining ISO-9000 and ISO-14001 Certification and Capital Grant to Small Scale Industries Associations for setting up International Standard Laboratories for Quality Upgradation improvement in productivity; Market Development Assistance Scheme, participatin in International Exhibitions, Vendor Development Programmes and Financial Assistance to Industry Associations for setting up of Sub Contracting Exchanges for facilitating marketing.

Presence of organisms in space

†1038. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian scientists have confirmed presence of organisms during their space research;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the country has abandoned the plan of sending its unmanned/Manned Spacecraft to Moon;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) if not, the details thereof and the progress made, so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SPACE (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) A joint Indo-UK Team of Scientists conducted an experiment on January 21, 2001 employing ISRO's cryogenic sampler balloon payload to test the presence of extra-terrestrial micro-organisms in the Earth's stratosphere at 41 km.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.